

Natural Hazard Perceptions, Natural Disaster Experiences & Recovery at American Public Horticulture Institutions

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Abstract: Public horticulture institutions (PHI), as stewards of living plant collections, are threatened by a variety of impacts from natural hazards. Ranging from geological and hydrological events to meteorological events, public gardens must manage the effects of natural forces on plants, structures, and business operations. PHI directors, horticulturists, risk managers and other staff were interviewed at five public gardens that experienced a natural disaster. The results reveal that there are many reactive issues that must be anticipated and managed in the wake of a natural disaster. Also, some opportunities may surface from the same experience. The impacts and issues relating to a natural disaster experience are likely site-specific, although many of the impacts and issues have a commonality to all PHI. One way to help manage the impacts of natural hazards includes the use of a disaster response and recovery plan. A national survey involving 224 PHI across the United States determined public gardens' current natural hazard risk perceptions and recent disaster experiences (1980-1999). This survey revealed that most public gardens do not have a disaster plan, and even fewer have a disaster recovery plan. However, past disaster experiences did result in increased risk perceptions for all natural hazards covered in this study. Further investigation suggests overall impact on historical plants and facilities causes American PHI to develop a disaster response plan, and an overall impact on plant and facilities in general causes public gardens to draft a recovery plan. Results also indicate that there are no differences in the types of losses sustained from natural disasters between governmental and non-governmental, governmental recovery resources to facilitate recovery efforts by both governmental and private PHI. Thus, governmental PHI are more likely to have the internal resources to recover from a natural disaster.

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